

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

MATTHEW T. VANPIETERSOM,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 18-CV-60-JPS

SGT. PETERSON and HSU
PROVIDER,

ORDER

Defendants.

Plaintiff Matthew J. Vanpietersom, who is incarcerated at Waupun Correctional Institution, proceeds in this matter *pro se*. He filed a complaint alleging that Defendants violated his constitutional rights. (Docket #1). This matter comes before the court on Plaintiff's petition to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee (*in forma pauperis*). (Docket #2). Plaintiff has been assessed and paid an initial partial filing fee of \$5.54. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1).

The court shall screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief against a governmental entity or an officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has raised claims that are legally "frivolous or malicious," that fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or that seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. *Id.* § 1915A(b).

A claim is legally frivolous when it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989); *Hutchinson ex rel. Baker v. Spink*, 126 F.3d 895, 900

(7th Cir. 1997). The court may, therefore, dismiss a claim as frivolous where it is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory or where the factual contentions are clearly baseless. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327. “Malicious,” although sometimes treated as a synonym for “frivolous,” “is more usefully construed as intended to harass.” *Lindell v. McCallum*, 352 F.3d 1107, 1109-10 (7th Cir. 2003) (citations omitted).

To state a cognizable claim under the federal notice pleading system, the plaintiff is required to provide a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that [he] is entitled to relief[.]” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). It is not necessary for the plaintiff to plead specific facts and his statement need only “give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)). However, a complaint that offers mere “labels and conclusions” or a “formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). To state a claim, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, “that is plausible on its face.” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). The complaint’s allegations “must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (citation omitted).

In considering whether a complaint states a claim, courts should follow the principles set forth in *Twombly* by first, “identifying pleadings that, because they are no more than conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption of truth.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679. Legal conclusions must be

supported by factual allegations. *Id.* If there are well-pleaded factual allegations, the court must, second, “assume their veracity and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief.” *Id.*

To state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983, a plaintiff must allege that: 1) he was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States; and 2) the deprivation was visited upon him by a person or persons acting under color of state law. *Buchanan-Moore v. County of Milwaukee*, 570 F.3d 824, 827 (7th Cir. 2009) (citing *Kramer v. Vill. of N. Fond du Lac*, 384 F.3d 856, 861 (7th Cir. 2004)); *see also Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980). The court is obliged to give the plaintiff’s *pro se* allegations, “however inartfully pleaded,” a liberal construction. *See Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976)).

Plaintiff alleges that since 2012, he has “been on control all meds,” which suggests to the Court that distribution of medications to him is more tightly controlled than for other inmates. (Docket #1 at 2). Plaintiff explains that packs of certain medication are not permitted in his cell. *Id.* Despite this restriction, Defendant Sgt. Peterson (“Peterson”) gave Plaintiff a sixty-pill pack of Naproxen on September 11, 2017. *Id.* Plaintiff promptly took every pill in the pack. *Id.* Plaintiff was taken to the hospital, where he had to stay in the ICU overnight. *Id.* at 2-3. Plaintiff says that this incident happened because the guards “simpl[y] don’t care.” *Id.* at 3.

The Eighth Amendment provides, *inter alia*, that prisoners are entitled to a minimal level of healthcare while in custody. *Petties v. Carter*, 836 F.3d 722, 727-28 (7th Cir. 2016). The Eighth Amendment is violated when the prisoner shows that they “suffered from an objectively serious medical condition,” and that “the individual defendant was deliberately

indifferent to that condition." *Id.* at 728. The *Gayton* case neatly summarizes the claim:

[T]he plaintiff must show that: (1) [he] had an objectively serious medical condition; (2) the defendants knew of the condition and were deliberately indifferent to treating h[im]; and (3) this indifference caused h[im] some injury. An objectively serious medical condition is one that has been diagnosed by a physician as mandating treatment or one that is so obvious that even a lay person would perceive the need for a doctor's attention. A medical condition need not be life-threatening to be serious; rather, it could be a condition that would result in further significant injury or unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain if not treated.

With regard to the deliberate indifference prong, the plaintiff must show that the official acted with the requisite culpable state of mind. This inquiry has two components. The official must have subjective knowledge of the risk to the inmate's health, and the official also must disregard that risk. Evidence that the official acted negligently is insufficient to prove deliberate indifference. Rather, deliberate indifference is simply a synonym for intentional or reckless conduct, and that reckless describes conduct so dangerous that the deliberate nature of the defendant's actions can be inferred. Simply put, an official must both be aware of facts from which the inference could be drawn that a substantial risk of serious harm exists, and he must also draw the inference. Even if a defendant recognizes the substantial risk, he is free from liability if he responded reasonably to the risk, even if the harm ultimately was not averted.

Gayton v. McCoy, 593 F.3d 610, 620 (7th Cir. 2010) (citations and quotations omitted). In sum, "deliberate indifference means actual, personal knowledge of a serious risk, coupled with the lack of any reasonable response to it." *Ayoubi v. Dart*, No. 17-1561, 2018 WL 671152, at *2 (7th Cir. Feb. 2, 2018).

Viewing Plaintiff's allegations in a light most favorable to him, he may proceed against Peterson for a claim of deliberate indifference. Plaintiff alleges that he had serious medical conditions, both in his medication restriction and his later hospitalization. He further alleges that his medication intake was restricted for years prior to the September 2017 incident. The Court infers from this that Peterson knew he should not give Plaintiff the full pack of Naproxen. The Court further infers that Peterson knew that giving Plaintiff the pack created a substantial risk that Plaintiff would overdose and suffer severe injury. Whether these inferences are ultimately supported by fact must be left for a later time. Plaintiff may not proceed against the unnamed "HSU Provider," however. That person is not mentioned anywhere in the body of the Complaint.

In sum, the Court finds that Plaintiff may proceed on the following claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b): Deliberate indifference to Plaintiff's serious medical needs on September 11, 2017, in violation of the Eighth Amendment, against Defendant Sgt. Peterson.

Accordingly,

IT IS ORDERED that Plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee (*in forma pauperis*) (Docket #2) be and the same is hereby **GRANTED**;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendant HSU Provider be and the same is hereby **DISMISSED** from this action;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that pursuant to an informal service agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Justice and this Court, copies of Plaintiff's Complaint and this order are being electronically sent today to the Wisconsin Department of Justice for service on the state defendant;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, pursuant to the informal service agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Justice and this Court, the defendant shall file a responsive pleading to the complaint within sixty (60) days of receiving electronic notice of this order;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the agency having custody of Plaintiff shall collect from his institution trust account the balance of the filing fee by collecting monthly payments from Plaintiff's prison trust account in an amount equal to 20% of the preceding month's income credited to Plaintiff's trust account and forwarding payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The payments shall be clearly identified by the case name and number assigned to this action. If Plaintiff is transferred to another institution, county, state, or federal, the transferring institution shall forward a copy of this Order along with Plaintiff's remaining balance to the receiving institution;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that a copy of this order be sent to the officer in charge of the agency where Plaintiff is confined;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, pursuant to the Prisoner E-Filing Program, Plaintiff shall submit all correspondence and case filings to institution staff, who will scan and e-mail documents to the Court.¹ If Plaintiff is no longer incarcerated at a Prisoner E-Filing institution, he will be required to submit all correspondence and legal material to:

¹The Prisoner E-Filing Program is in effect at Columbia Correctional Institution, Dodge Correctional Institution, Green Bay Correctional Institution, Oshkosh Correctional Institution, Waupun Correctional Institution, and Wisconsin Secure Program Facility.

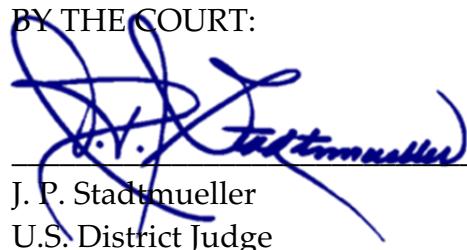
Office of the Clerk
United States District Court
Eastern District of Wisconsin
362 United States Courthouse
517 E. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

PLEASE DO NOT MAIL ANYTHING DIRECTLY TO THE COURT'S
CHAMBERS. It will only delay the processing of the matter.

Plaintiff is further advised that failure to make a timely submission
may result in the dismissal of this action for failure to prosecute. In addition,
the parties must notify the Clerk of Court of any change of address. Failure
to do so could result in orders or other information not being timely
delivered, thus affecting the legal rights of the parties.

Dated at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this 16th day of February, 2018.

BY THE COURT:



J. P. Stadtmueller
U.S. District Judge